

Review of: Cristian Tileaga and Jovan Byford, eds., *Psychology and History. Interdisciplinary Explorations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

*Psychology and History. Interdisciplinary Explorations*, edited by Cristian Tileaga and Jovan Byford, is an attempt to create a space for academic inquiry based on interdisciplinary engagement and dialogue between the fields of history and psychology. It thereby seeks to challenge and counter what the editors argue has been not simply a traditional divide between these two academic disciplines, but also a history of mutual suspicion, dubiety and lack of interest or scholarly curiosity about other disciplinary pursuit. As such, the ambition of the collection edited by Tileaga and Byford is to overcome the mono-disciplinary culture of reservation and non-engagement, and to set the ground for a counter-culture, rooted in the interdisciplinary practice of mutual curiosity, openness, and engagement.

The editors ask what interdisciplinarity would mean in a scholarly pursuit that involves both *historicizing* psychology and *psychologizing* history. They list approaches based on merging or appropriating other disciplinary perspectives (as for example in the sub-disciplines of psychohistory or psychobiography), as well as those that engage in transferring, borrowing and translating other disciplinary ideas, concepts and methods into their own frameworks of inquiry (this is exemplified, according to the editors, by the recently emergent field of the “history of emotions”). What is interesting in this context (and what is somewhat missing in the editors’ introductory exposition) is the question about the operations and limits of disciplinarity as such in the sense of the traditional organization of knowledge into fields of inquiry with often rigorously enforced boundaries, with particular *disciplining effects*, and that are formative of who legitimately counts as the “knowing subject” or an academic expert. This also raises the question what, in other contexts, has been addressed through the idiom of *trans-disciplinarity*—what resides in-between, in the interstices of, or beyond disciplinary thinking? The editors make an interesting gesture in this direction when they reflect on the place of translation in interdisciplinary inquiry, which they understand as “recuperation” of lost meanings (and, one could also add, as “reevaluation” or “transvaluation” of what has been traditionally devalued or discredited) within specific disciplines.

The collection covers a variety of topics and contexts. It is divided into three thematic sections. The first part focuses on the dialogue between theoretical approaches in the disciplines of history and psychology, and, more interestingly still, it seeks to *theorize* both the (alleged) incommensurability of psychology and history (in the contributions by Joan W. Scott and by Paul H. Elovitz—both concentrate, specifically, on psychoanalysis and on the history of its development and influence in the West, and on the feminist historians’ complicated relationship to psychoanalysis). This part of the collection also asks about the possibilities and potentials for cross-disciplinary inspirations and practices (in the contribution by Jeremy T. Burman, which considers the prospects for historicizing psychology, and for psychologizing history, from the combined perspectives of neuroscience and “history-from-within” in the works of Lynn Hunt and Daniel Lord Smail). Other essays in the first section of the volume describe and analyze the limits of interdisciplinarity both in terms of the conceptual apparatus employed within the psychological and historical fields, and in terms of the tensions between their respective epistemological and methodological apparatuses. This is thematized in relation to the questions of social representation and social

psychology (in the contribution by Ivana Markova) and in relation to the issue of social memory (in the contribution by Geoffrey Cubitt).

The second part of *Psychology and History* maps the cross-disciplinary dialogue in the empirical historical and psychological research with a specific focus on issues of cognition, affect, emotions and the subject/self. This is thematized in relation to gender, sexuality and the history/psychology of desire (in the contribution by Carolyn J. Dean), in relation to the so-called “affective turn” in theoretical humanities and the project of historicizing emotionality in Western modernity (in the contribution by Rob Boddice), and in relation to the psychology of cognition and the potential of cognitive approaches to shed light on (the history of) foreign policy dynamics (in the contribution by Mark E. Blum). The second section also includes a multi-authored essay (by George Turner, Susan Condor and Alan Collins) on the conceptual history of the idea of self-esteem (before its elaboration by William James in his 1890 book *Principles of Psychology*) in pseudo-scientific phrenology and in literary fiction and non-fiction. The third and final part of the collection continues the focus on empirical dialogues between history and psychology. It focuses on the topics of history of social prejudice and racism (in the contribution by Kevin Durrheim) and the combined socio-psychological and historical approach to anti-Semitism (in the contribution by Michael Billig, which examines the works of Peretz F. Bernstein and Henri Tajfel). It further focuses on racial and ethnic stereotypes and the socio-psychological dynamics of stereotyping (in the contribution by Mark Knights), as well as on the “national character” and the psycho-historical dynamics of identity formation (in the contribution by Cathie Carmichael, placed in the context of the former Yugoslavia).

The collection offers a judicious and insightful consideration of the connections, overlaps and correspondences between the psychological and historical studies of the human condition as it seeks to overcome the traditionally existing suspicions and lack of engagement between these two disciplines. What is particularly important about the design of the collection in general, and the focus of many of the contributions in particular, is the ambition to highlight and thematize the dynamics, potentials and limits of interdisciplinarity from the perspective of marginalized, peripheral and counter traditions of knowledge. Given that attentiveness to, among others, questions of gender, ethnicity and race, the volume is, however, marked by a rather conspicuous and puzzling absence of non-Western perspectives (with the notable exceptions of some of the essays included in the third section of the collection that focus on racial “othering”). While this Western-centric framework is undoubtedly due to the editors’ and the authors’ specific fields of expertise and their shared epistemic and cultural interests, there is a need for a more explicit acknowledgment of, and perhaps a reflection about, the Euro-centric assumptions that seem to backstop the otherwise very important attempt at opening a cross-disciplinary dialogue between psychology and history. In a broader perspective, there is also a need for disrupting and *provincializing* the Euro-centric epistemic traditions that have plagued both the disciplines of history and psychology, so that the pursuit of interdisciplinarity is positioned in relation to the project (and politics) of de-colonizing the production of academic knowledge.

This problem aside, the cogent analyses provided by the contributors offer a much-needed indication of the ongoing transformations of the practice and understanding of interdisciplinarity. The astute examination offered in the volume makes it a valuable

aid both for advanced undergraduate and postgraduate students grappling with the complexities of the psychology and history of human condition, and for scholars of the social sciences seeking to place their research in cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary contexts. In particular, the collection would benefit students of social psychology, global history, emotions and affect, history and psychology of cognition, gender studies and subject/subjectivity. One would only hope that the thoughtful account provided in this collection would in turn inspire greater interdisciplinary openness and engagement across the psychological and historical fields.

MAGDALENA ZOLKOS

*Institute for Social Justice*

*Australian Catholic University*